By
MIKE W. BARR
ROB DAVIS
JOHN TIGHE
ADAM HUGHES

Full-Color Series

$2.50 U.S./$2.95 Can.

Innovation heralds the return of original artist **Adam Hughes** to the cover artwork for this issue of ***THE MAZE AGENCY***!

Once again, join New York's prettiest detective, Jennifer Mays of The MAZE Agency -- along with her boyfriend, true crime writer Gabriel Webb -- for a fair-play whodunit challenging you to solve the mystery as it unfolds!

THIS ISSUE: In "The Adventure of the Mystery League," Jennifer Mays and Gabriel Webb attend a Christmas Party at The Mystery League, a society of brilliant detectives. But they encounter a maddening murder that even the Mystery League can't solve!

C'mon,
We're Going
For A Slay Ride!

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INNOVATION™

Some Resolutions About That Super-Team Book We Do

I talk about *THE MAZE AGENCY* in *HERO ALLIANCE*, so I think this issue I'll return the compliment: I think that, in 1991, the *HERO ALLIANCE* fans among you are in for a great time. Why? Well, how about this:

This Spring, in *HERO ALLIANCE #15*, artist **Mark Jones** returns to illustrate the issue in a special technique. Scripted by **Robert M. Ingersoll**, it's entitled, "Any Resemblance Between Persons Living Or Dead...." It deals with merchandising, particularly since Uncle Ross, who was murdered back in *HERO ALLIANCE: END OF THE GOLDEN AGE #1*, was in charge of all the Guardmen licensing. It's a joy. Special sections of the book will be illustrated by pencillers **George Broderick** and **Eddy Newell**, and inker **Mike Witherby**.

HERO ALLIANCE QUARTERLY #1 offers the Innovation debut of **George Perez**! Along with **George**'s cover, you'll find "As I Was Going To St. Ives," by **George Broderick**, **Matt Thompson** & **George Perez** and a Kris solo, entitled "Past Perfect," by **Michael Buckley** and **J. Trent Pearson**. As an added bonus: A big *HERO ALLIANCE* portfolio by **Mark Jones**. It'll ship in April, cost $2.75, and the airbrushed full-process color will be terrific!

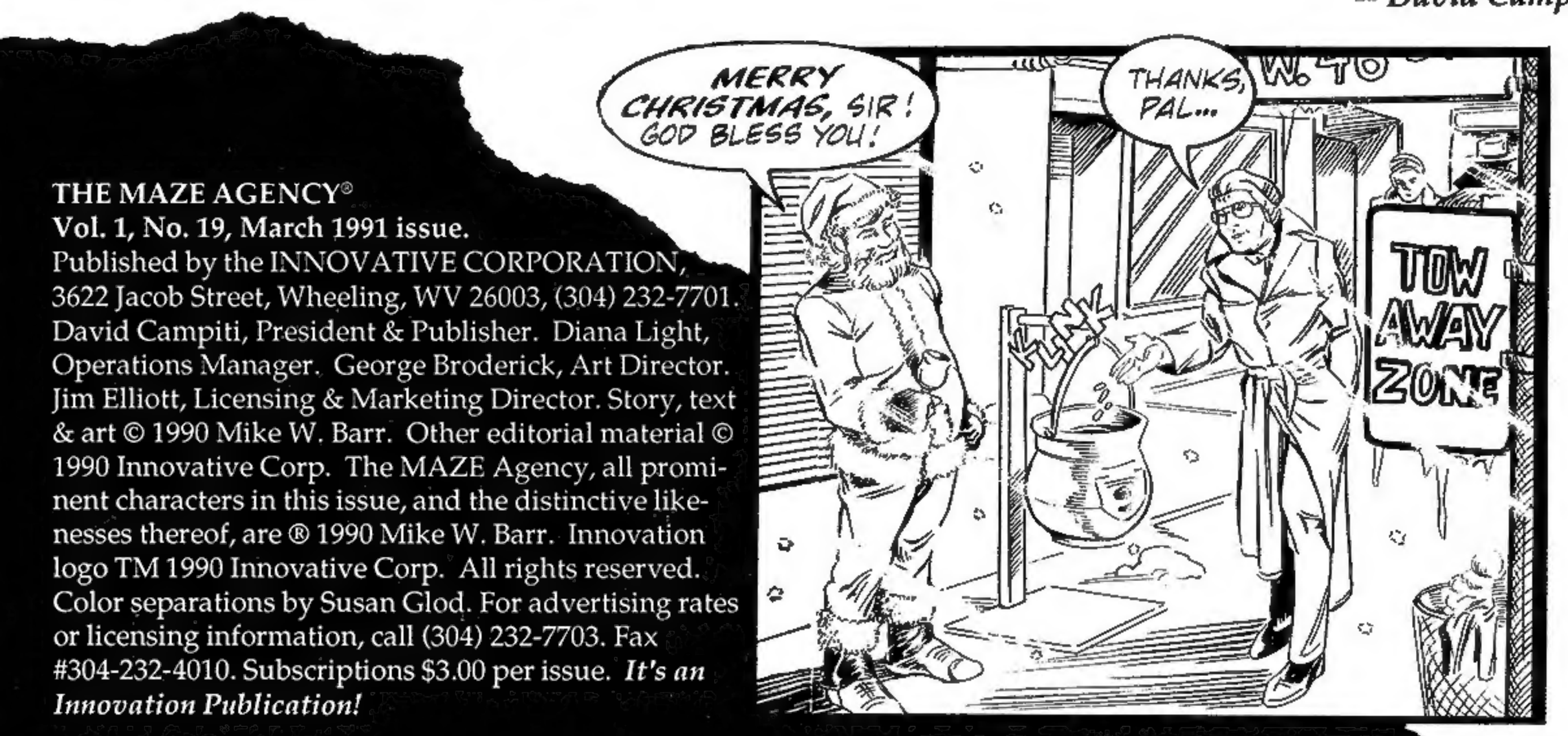
SENTRY SPECIAL #1 offers everything you've ever wanted to know about Sentry -- and less. While it's not the original *SENTRY* series we'd planned, it's a test to see how much you'd like to see a new *SENTRY* series finally materialize. Story is by the ever-logical **Robert M. Ingersoll**, and the moody artwork is by **Ted Naifeh**, whose work you can see this month in *Gene Wolfe's THE SHADOW OF THE TORTURER #1*, now on sale. *SENTRY SPECIAL #1* is also in full color, and $2.75, and worth it!

But it doesn't end there. Y'see, we've always had a commitment to bringing you *HERO ALLIANCE* in a big way -- and we've been extremely picky about artists. But now, a number of things have clicked into place: **J. Trent Pearson** has committed to *HERO ALLIANCE* long-term (moving from Las Vegas, NV to Wheeling, WV to work with us in person); **Mark Jones** finished commitments elsewhere; **George Perez** was itchin' to work with us on it; **Matt** (*STARGRAZERS*) **Thompson**'s schedule opened up to do more comics; **Michal Dutkiewicz** finished his *HERO ALLIANCE* commitment but wants to do more; **Brian Stelfreeze** decided to make time for covers with the above-mentioned **Mr. Pearson**; *Garfield* artist **Gary Barker**, who'd originally hoped to draw *HERO ALLIANCE #10* for us, found time to begin a 10-pager for us; **Eddy Newell** materialized from *The Twilight Zone* to tackle some pages; **Ted Naifeh** wanted to do a moody super-hero story, which was ideal for *SENTRY*; and inker **Mike Witherby** returned from his sabbatical, rarin' to go!

The writing contingent was equally impressive: **Robert M. Ingersoll** has been dying to write *SENTRY* and worked up a Sentry story that knocked our socks off; after shying away from super-team concepts until he saw the quality of available artists, *CYBERPUNK* writer **Scott Rockwell** has created a couple of offbeat stories; **David Lawrence**, whose last Innovation project was the Paul Smith-drawn Victor and Kris story in *HERO ALLIANCE ANNUAL #1*, decided to repeat the honor this year with a Gemini Plus tale; newcomer **Mike Buckley** did wonders with a Kris solo; **George Broderick**, known around here as the "Stealth Bomber" for a multitude of reasons, has created a collection of stories too wonderful to ignore; and even I've found myself jumping back in, with issue *#17*, to work out a revamped direction with **J. Trent Pearson** that has me hopin' for the time to stick around for awhile.

We've never had such an availability of top-notch writers and artists available to us in any capacity, for this title. So it made sense to begin a *HERO ALLIANCE QUARTERLY* to make the best showcase for everybody's talents. (No jokes, please, about the *regular* series being a quarterly there, for awhile.) We're excited, revved up, and ready to rock'n'roll!

-- David Campiti



THE MAZE AGENCY®
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THE MYSTERY LEAGUE

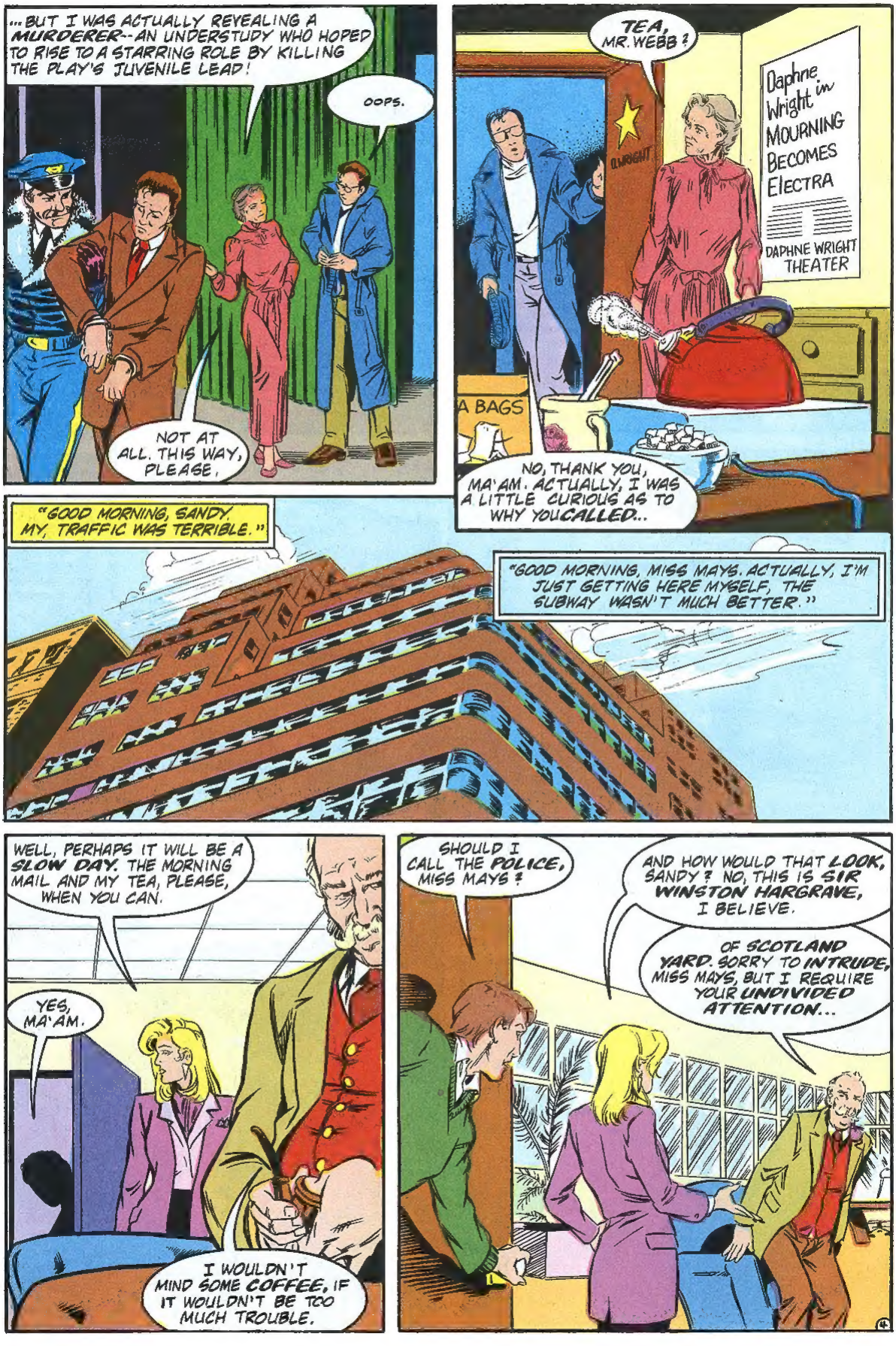
Hereby elects *Jennifer Mays* and *Gabriel Webb* to membership for life -- with all privileges and gratuities including full voting rights and access to the League's closed files and criminological library. It is further resolved and acted upon that Miss Mays and Mr. Webb shall receive a special commendation for their expert assistance in the case which is entitled in our records...

"THE ADVENTURE OF THE MYSTERY LEAGUE"

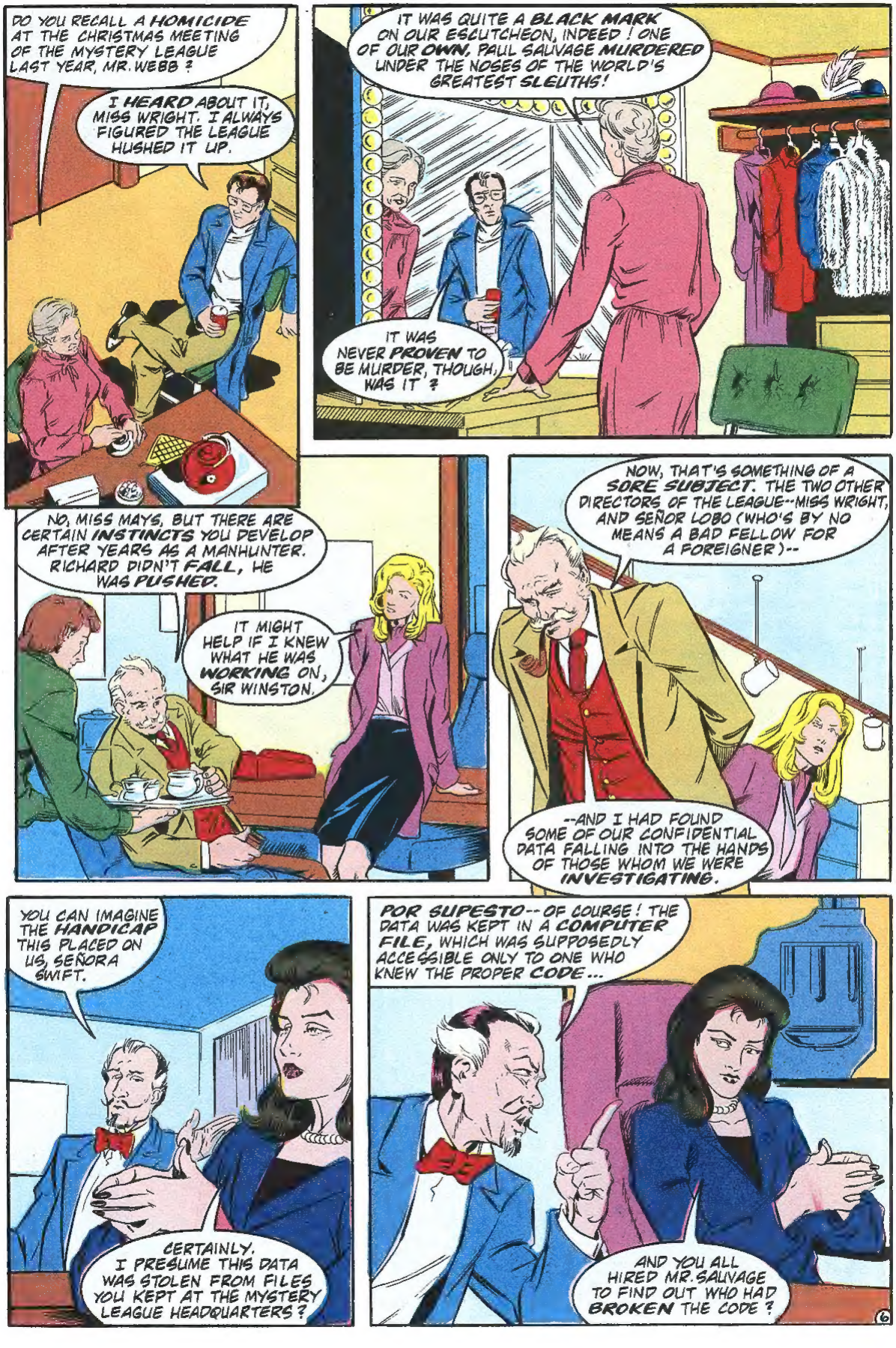
MIKE W. BARR	ROB DAVIS	JOHN TIGHE	VICKIE WILLIAMS	SUSAN GLOD MICHELLE BASIL
Writer/Creator	Penciller	Inker	Letterer	Colorists

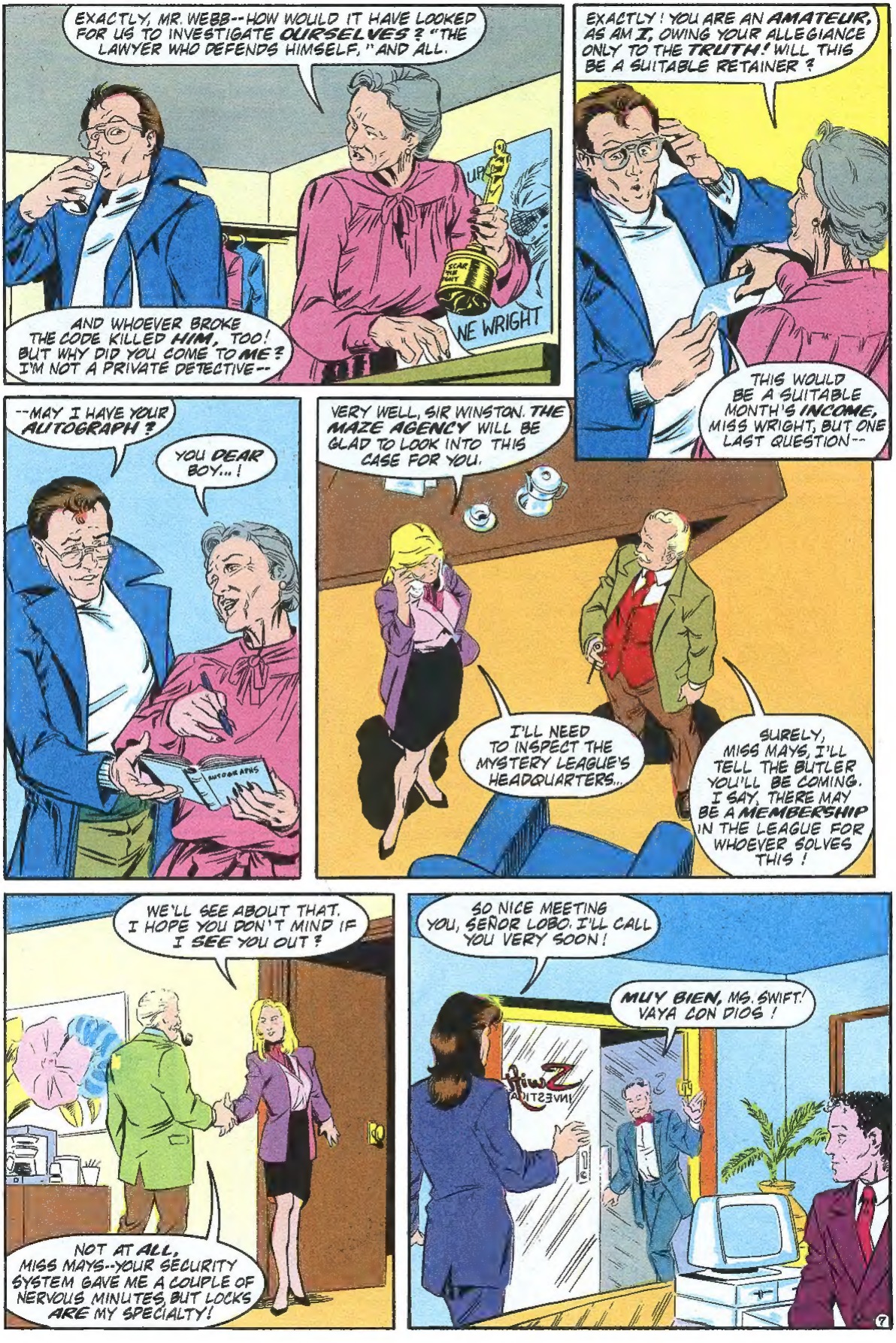
Christmas Eve, 1989
YOU PULLED THE WOOL OVER MY EYES, ALL RIGHT! WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO NOW, KILL ME?
PLEASE, MR. SAUVAGE, I NEED TIME TO THINK--
LET ME TAKE THAT OFF YOUR HANDS!
NO--!
SPLASH

DECEMBER 21, 1990...
Follies
W. 46 ST
BROADWAY
TOW AWAY ZONE
MERRY CHRISTMAS, SIR! GOD BLESS YOU!
THANKS, PAL...
DAPHNE WRIGHT THEATER
...IF I CAN'T SCRAPE UP SOME CASH FOR A GIFT FOR JEN, I'LL NEED IT!
WELL, THIS IS THE PLACE...
YOU GUYS KNOW WHERE I CAN FIND MISS WRIGHT?
EXIT
SHE'S ON STAGE, PAL-- KEEP IT QUIET!
SORRY.
HOW ...HOW DID YOU KNOW WHERE I HID THAT?
BECAUSE I AM AN ACTRESS, CHARLES--I PLACED MYSELF IN YOUR POSITION, AND ASKED MYSELF WHERE I WOULD CONCEAL SUCH A WEAPON!
?
GREAT REHEARSAL, MISS WRIGHT!
CLAP CLAP CLAP
AH, MISTER WEBB, I BELIEVE! THANK YOU SO MUCH...
5

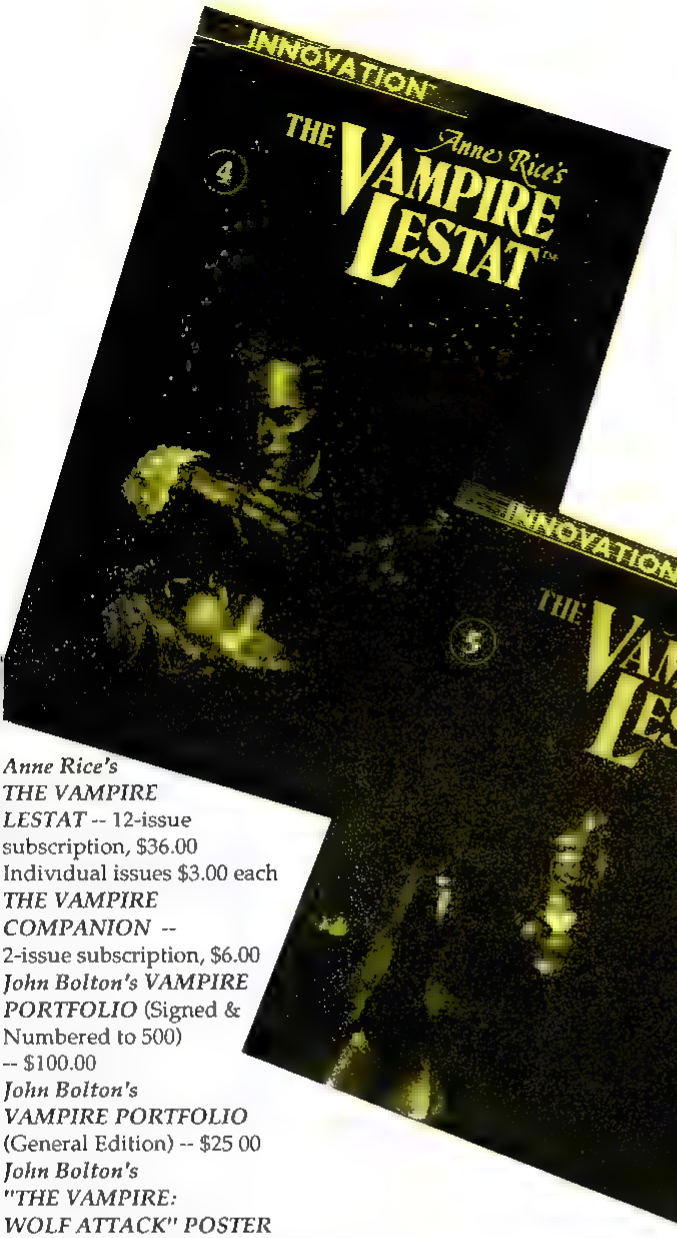

...BUT I WAS ACTUALLY REVEALING A MURDERER--AN UNDERSTUDY WHO HOPED TO RISE TO A STARRING ROLE BY KILLING THE PLAY'S JUVENILE LEAD!
OOPS.
NOT AT ALL. THIS WAY, PLEASE.
TEA, MR. WEBB?
Daphne Wright in MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA
DAPHNE WRIGHT THEATER
D.WRIGHT
A BAGS
NO, THANK YOU, MA'AM. ACTUALLY, I WAS A LITTLE CURIOUS AS TO WHY YOU CALLED..
"GOOD MORNING, SANDY. MY, TRAFFIC WAS TERRIBLE."
"GOOD MORNING, MISS MAYS. ACTUALLY, I'M JUST GETTING HERE MYSELF, THE SUBWAY WASN'T MUCH BETTER."
WELL, PERHAPS IT WILL BE A SLOW DAY. THE MORNING MAIL AND MY TEA, PLEASE, WHEN YOU CAN.
YES, MA'AM.
I WOULDN'T MIND SOME COFFEE, IF IT WOULDN'T BE TOO MUCH TROUBLE.
SHOULD I CALL THE POLICE, MISS MAYS?
AND HOW WOULD THAT LOOK, SANDY? NO, THIS IS SIR WINSTON HARGRAVE, I BELIEVE.
OF SCOTLAND YARD. SORRY TO INTRUDE, MISS MAYS, BUT I REQUIRE YOUR UNDIVIDED ATTENTION...

"IS HE HERE, YET, PATRICK ?"
"NO, MS. SWIFT..."
...BUT THIS... GENTLEMAN HAS A PACKAGE FOR YOU. HE SAYS HE'S TO DELIVER IT TO NO ONE BUT YOU.
OH, VERY WELL, COME IN.
Swift
INVESTIGATIONS, INC.
ASHLEY SWIFT
T'ANKS, MIZ-A SWIFT...
...BUT I'M EXPECTING A VERY IMPORTANT >GASP<
YOUR "VERY IMPORTANT CLIENT" HA ARRIVIDO, MS. SWIFT-- HE HAS ARRIVED...
...BUT SEÑOR LOBO, HE PREFERS TO MAKE HIS ENTRANCE AS SURREPTITIOUSLY AS POSSIBLE, SI ? I HAVE MUCHOS ENEMIES!
I WILL SAY YOUR CALL INTRIGUED ME, SEÑOR. I HOPED IT WAS ABOUT MYSTERY LEAGUE BUSINESS.
SI, WELL AM I AWARE OF YOUR DESIRE TO JOIN OUR GROUP, MS. SWIFT. I HAVE NOT COME TO EXTEND THAT INVITATION YET, BUT TO ENGAGE YOUR SERVICES...


DO YOU RECALL A HOMICIDE AT THE CHRISTMAS MEETING OF THE MYSTERY LEAGUE LAST YEAR, MR. WEBB ?
I HEARD ABOUT IT, MISS WRIGHT. I ALWAYS FIGURED THE LEAGUE HUSHED IT UP.
IT WAS QUITE A BLACK MARK ON OUR ESCUTCHEON, INDEED ! ONE OF OUR OWN, PAUL SAUVAGE MURDERED UNDER THE NOSES OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST SLEUTHS!
IT WAS NEVER PROVEN TO BE MURDER, THOUGH, WAS IT ?
NO, MISS MAYS, BUT THERE ARE CERTAIN INSTINCTS YOU DEVELOP AFTER YEARS AS A MANHUNTER. RICHARD DIDN'T FALL, HE WAS PUSHED.
IT MIGHT HELP IF I KNEW WHAT HE WAS WORKING ON, SIR WINSTON.
NOW, THAT'S SOMETHING OF A SORE SUBJECT. THE TWO OTHER DIRECTORS OF THE LEAGUE--MISS WRIGHT, AND SEÑOR LOBO (WHO'S BY NO MEANS A BAD FELLOW FOR A FOREIGNER)--
--AND I HAD FOUND SOME OF OUR CONFIDENTIAL DATA FALLING INTO THE HANDS OF THOSE WHOM WE WERE INVESTIGATING.
YOU CAN IMAGINE THE HANDICAP THIS PLACED ON US, SEÑORA SWIFT.
CERTAINLY. I PRESUME THIS DATA WAS STOLEN FROM FILES YOU KEPT AT THE MYSTERY LEAGUE HEADQUARTERS?
POR SUPESTO-- OF COURSE ! THE DATA WAS KEPT IN A COMPUTER FILE, WHICH WAS SUPPOSEDLY ACCESSIBLE ONLY TO ONE WHO KNEW THE PROPER CODE...
AND YOU ALL HIRED MR. SAUVAGE TO FIND OUT WHO HAD BROKEN THE CODE ?


EXACTLY, MR. WEBB--HOW WOULD IT HAVE LOOKED FOR US TO INVESTIGATE OURSELVES? "THE LAWYER WHO DEFENDS HIMSELF," AND ALL.
AND WHOEVER BROKE THE CODE KILLED HIM, TOO! BUT WHY DID YOU COME TO ME? I'M NOT A PRIVATE DETECTIVE--
EXACTLY! YOU ARE AN AMATEUR, AS AM I, OWING YOUR ALLEGIANCE ONLY TO THE TRUTH! WILL THIS BE A SUITABLE RETAINER?
THIS WOULD BE A SUITABLE MONTH'S INCOME, MISS WRIGHT, BUT ONE LAST QUESTION--
--MAY I HAVE YOUR AUTOGRAPH?
YOU DEAR BOY...!
VERY WELL, SIR WINSTON. THE MAZE AGENCY WILL BE GLAD TO LOOK INTO THIS CASE FOR YOU.
I'LL NEED TO INSPECT THE MYSTERY LEAGUE'S HEADQUARTERS...
SURELY, MISS MAYS, I'LL TELL THE BUTLER YOU'LL BE COMING. I SAY, THERE MAY BE A MEMBERSHIP IN THE LEAGUE FOR WHOEVER SOLVES THIS!
WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT. I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND IF I SEE YOU OUT?
NOT AT ALL, MISS MAYS--YOUR SECURITY SYSTEM GAVE ME A COUPLE OF NERVOUS MINUTES, BUT LOCKS ARE MY SPECIALTY!
SO NICE MEETING YOU, SEÑOR LOBO. I'LL CALL YOU VERY SOON!
MUY BIEN, MS. SWIFT! VAYA CON DIOS!
7

FIRST NATIONAL BANK
TALK ABOUT DOLLARS FROM HEAVEN! GOOD-BYE, DEBT; HELLO, CHRISTMAS GIFT FOR JEN...!
JOINING THE MYSTERY LEAGUE WOULD CERTAINLY BE A FEATHER IN YOUR CAP, MISS MAYS.
PERHAPS, SANDY... BUT I DON'T THINK THE LEAGUE HAS INITIATED ANY TRUE-CRIME WRITERS...
...THAT MIGHT MAKE A VERY NICE GIFT-- AS WELL AS A CAREER BOOST-- FOR MISTER WEBB.
YES, MA'AM.
PATRICK, WHAT DO I HAVE PLANNED FOR CHRISTMAS EVE?
YOU'RE HAVING FIFTY OF YOUR CLOSEST PERSONAL FRIENDS TO A CAROLLING PARTY, MS. SWIFT. BARRY MANILOW'S AGENT HAS CONFIRMED.
CANCEL IT.
MA'AM?
I'VE A FEELING I'M GOING TO BE ATTENDING THE MYSTERY LEAGUE'S CHRISTMAS PARTY... AS THEIR NEW MEMBER FOR 1990!
"HEY, IS THAT FOR ME?"
"WELL, THAT'S FOR ME TO KNOW, ISN'T IT, ACE...?"



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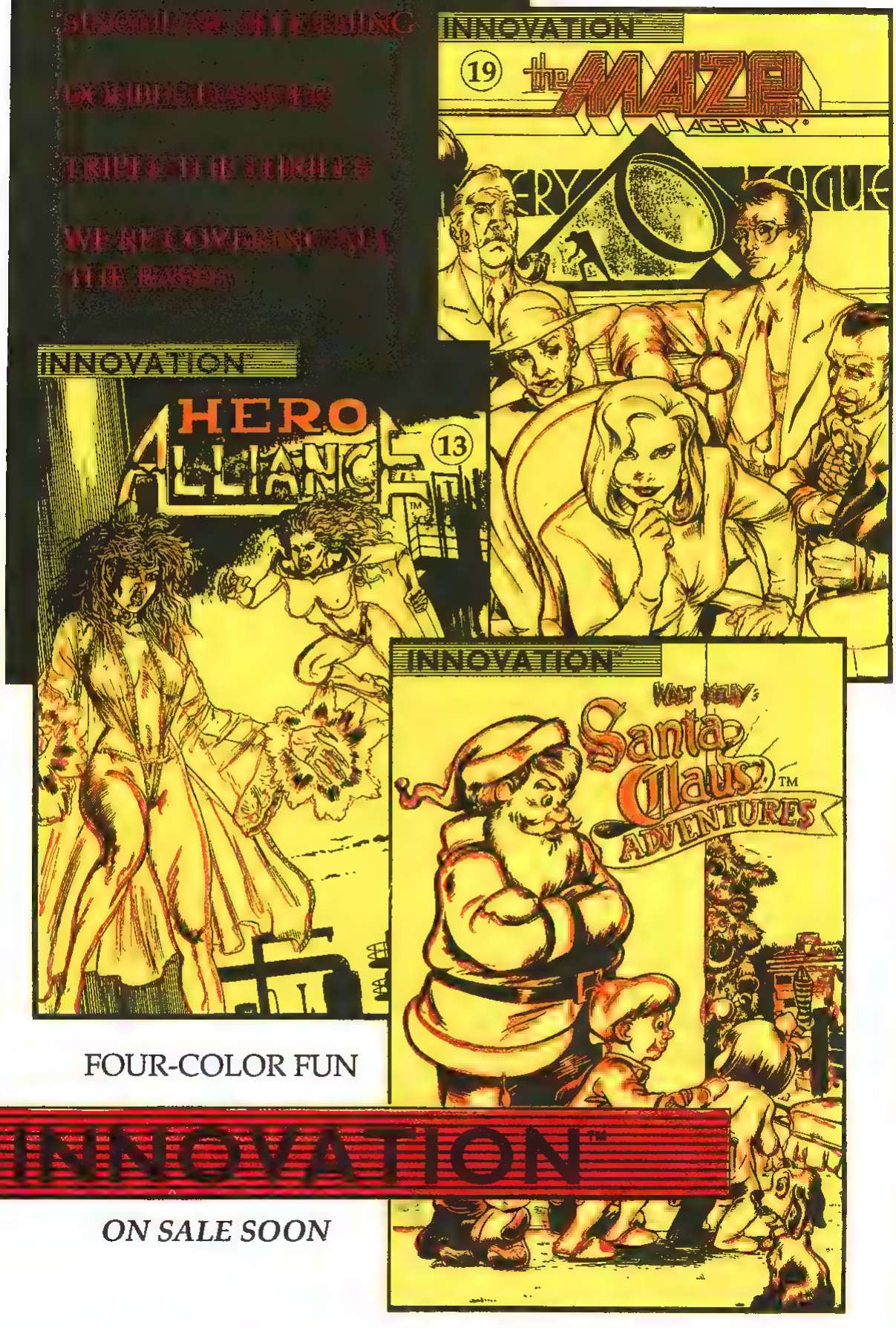
THE QUEEN OF THE DAMNED
THE MASTER OF RAMPLING GATE

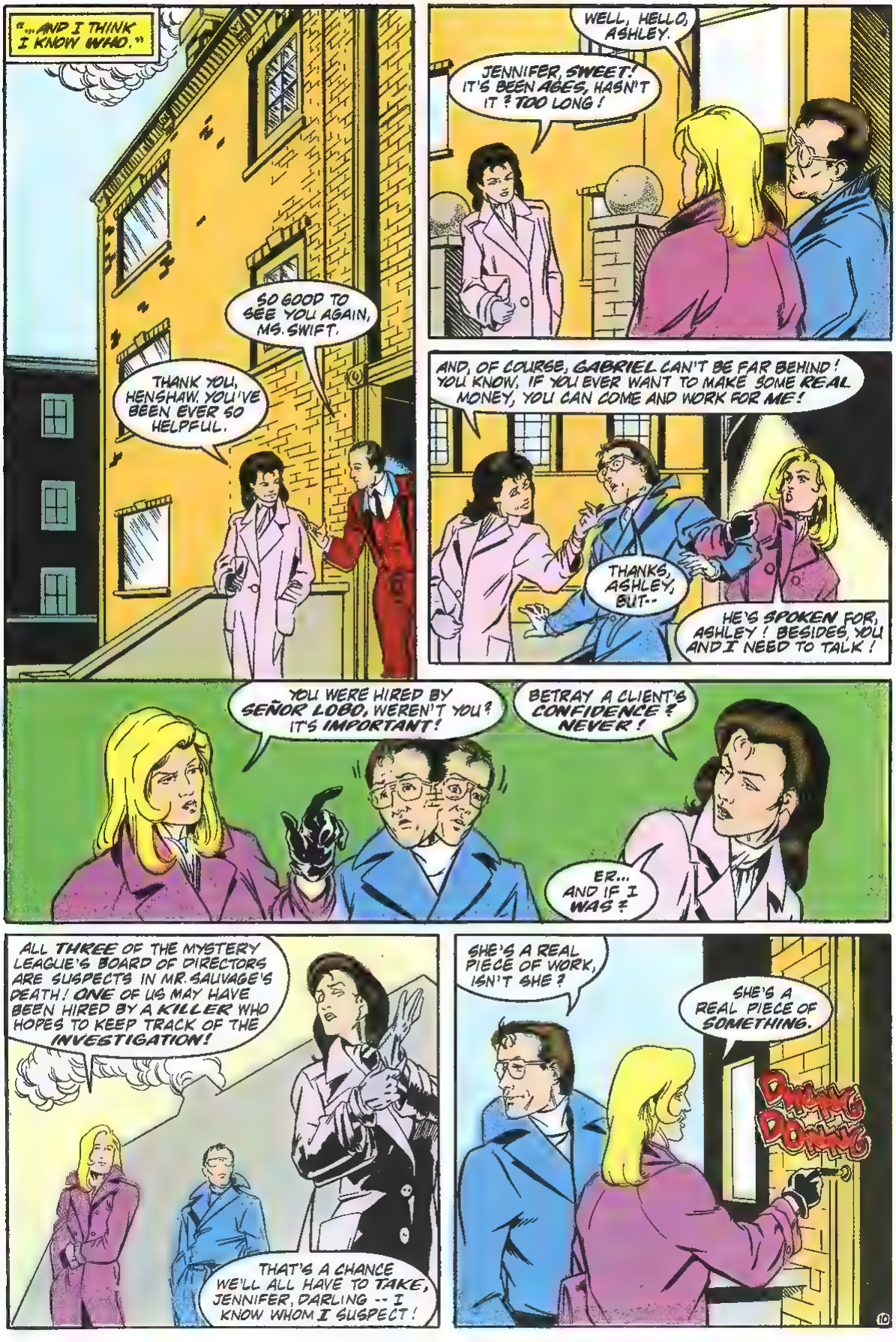


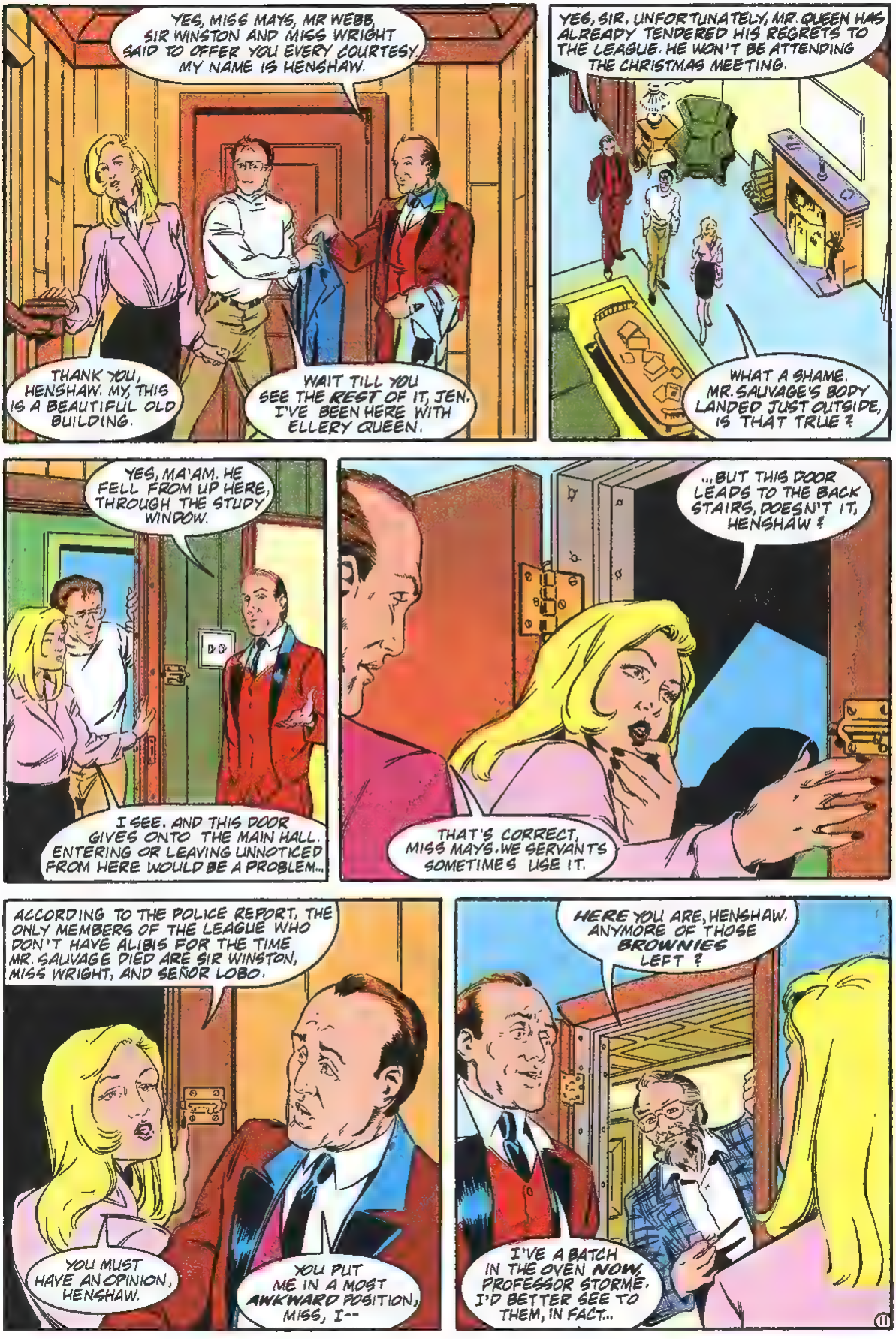
FOUR-COLOR FUN

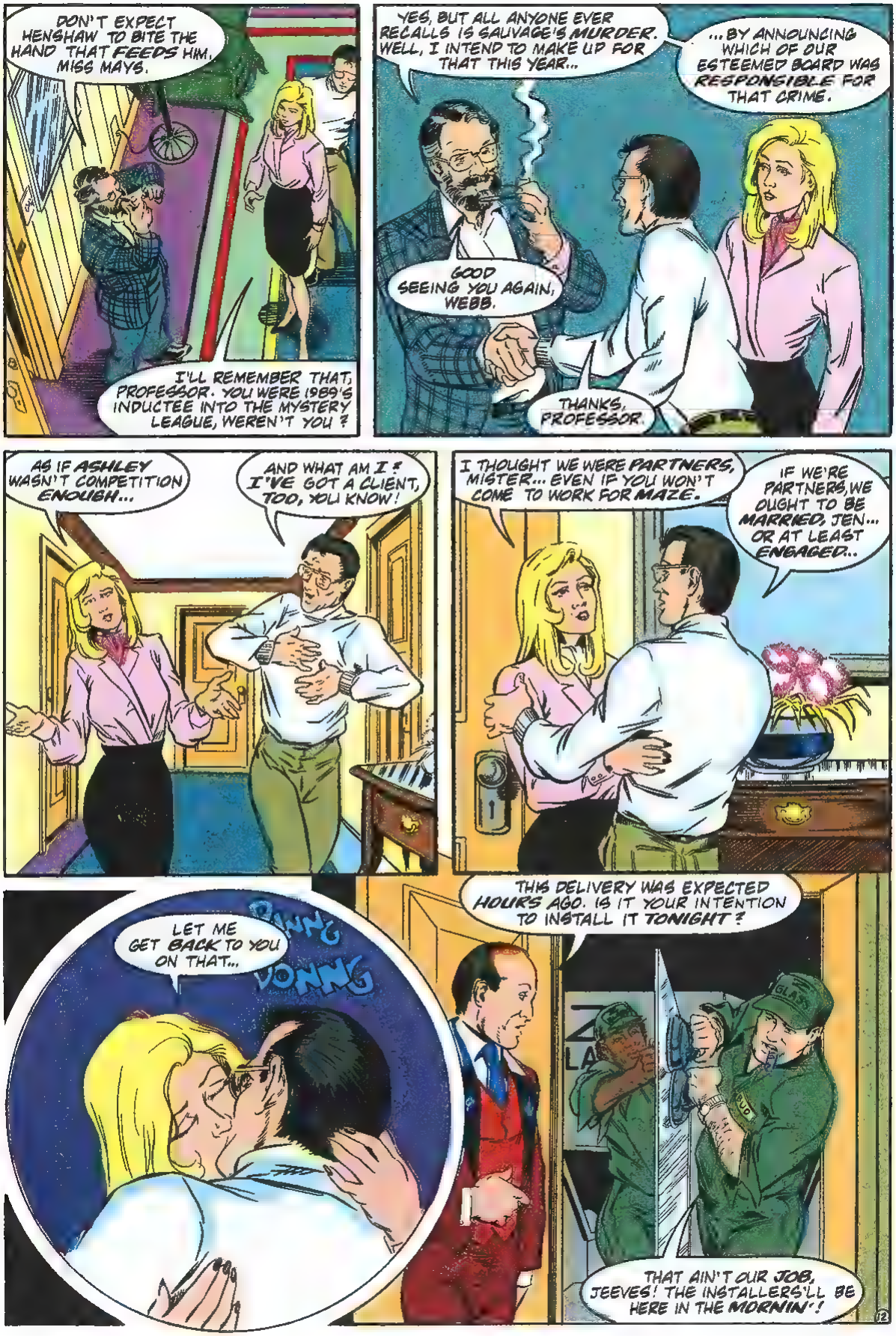
INNOVATION™

ON SALE SOON

...AT LEAST, UNTIL CHRISTMAS MORNING.
SUIT YOURSELF, BABE. I'VE GOT TO GO OUT, ANYWAY.
REALLY? SO DO I. IN FACT, I WAS HOPING YOU COULD COME ALONG. I'M DOING A LITTLE LEGWORK FOR A NEW CLIENT...
SORRY, JEN. AS A MATTER OF FACT, I'VE GOT A CLIENT OF MY OWN...
...THE MYSTERY LEAGUE.
?
THEY HIRED YOU, TOO?
"TOO?"
I THINK WE'D BETTER DISCUSS THIS, GABE.
GOOD IDEA.
RALPH, YOU STAY OUT OF THOSE PRESENTS, OKAY, PAL?
...SO TWO OF THE THREE MEMBERS OF THE LEAGUE'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS ARE TIED UP IN THIS, JEN. MAYBE SENOR LOBO HAS HIRED SOMEONE, TOO.
AS A MATTER OF FACT, I THINK HE HAS...
TAXI


"...AND I THINK I KNOW WHO."
SO GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, MS. SWIFT.
THANK YOU, HENSHAW. YOU'VE BEEN EVER SO HELPFUL.
WELL, HELLO, ASHLEY.
JENNIFER, SWEET! IT'S BEEN AGES, HASN'T IT? TOO LONG!
AND, OF COURSE, GABRIEL CAN'T BE FAR BEHIND! YOU KNOW, IF YOU EVER WANT TO MAKE SOME REAL MONEY, YOU CAN COME AND WORK FOR ME!
THANKS, ASHLEY, BUT--
HE'S SPOKEN FOR, ASHLEY! BESIDES, YOU AND I NEED TO TALK!
YOU WERE HIRED BY SEÑOR LOBO, WEREN'T YOU? IT'S IMPORTANT!
BETRAY A CLIENT'S CONFIDENCE? NEVER!
ER... AND IF I WAS?
ALL THREE OF THE MYSTERY LEAGUE'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS ARE SUSPECTS IN MR. SALVAGE'S DEATH! ONE OF US MAY HAVE BEEN HIRED BY A KILLER WHO HOPES TO KEEP TRACK OF THE INVESTIGATION!
THAT'S A CHANCE WE'LL ALL HAVE TO TAKE, JENNIFER, DARLING -- I KNOW WHOM I SUSPECT!
SHE'S A REAL PIECE OF WORK, ISN'T SHE?
SHE'S A REAL PIECE OF SOMETHING.
DING DONG
10


YES, MISS MAYS, MR WEBB, SIR WINSTON AND MISS WRIGHT SAID TO OFFER YOU EVERY COURTESY. MY NAME IS HENSHAW.
THANK YOU, HENSHAW. MY, THIS IS A BEAUTIFUL OLD BUILDING.
WAIT TILL YOU SEE THE REST OF IT, JEN. I'VE BEEN HERE WITH ELLERY QUEEN.
YES, SIR. UNFORTUNATELY, MR. QUEEN HAS ALREADY TENDERED HIS REGRETS TO THE LEAGUE. HE WON'T BE ATTENDING THE CHRISTMAS MEETING.
WHAT A SHAME. MR. SAUVAGE'S BODY LANDED JUST OUTSIDE, IS THAT TRUE?
YES, MA'AM. HE FELL FROM UP HERE, THROUGH THE STUDY WINDOW.
I SEE. AND THIS DOOR GIVES ONTO THE MAIN HALL. ENTERING OR LEAVING UNNOTICED FROM HERE WOULD BE A PROBLEM...
...BUT THIS DOOR LEADS TO THE BACK STAIRS, DOESN'T IT, HENSHAW?
THAT'S CORRECT, MISS MAYS. WE SERVANTS SOMETIMES USE IT.
ACCORDING TO THE POLICE REPORT, THE ONLY MEMBERS OF THE LEAGUE WHO DON'T HAVE ALIBIS FOR THE TIME MR. SAUVAGE DIED ARE SIR WINSTON, MISS WRIGHT, AND SEÑOR LOBO.
YOU MUST HAVE AN OPINION, HENSHAW.
YOU PUT ME IN A MOST AWKWARD POSITION, MISS, I--
HERE YOU ARE, HENSHAW. ANYMORE OF THOSE BROWNIES LEFT?
I'VE A BATCH IN THE OVEN NOW, PROFESSOR STORME. I'D BETTER SEE TO THEM, IN FACT...
11


DON'T EXPECT HENSHAW TO BITE THE HAND THAT FEEDS HIM, MISS MAYS.
I'LL REMEMBER THAT, PROFESSOR. YOU WERE 1989'S INDUCTEE INTO THE MYSTERY LEAGUE, WEREN'T YOU?
YES, BUT ALL ANYONE EVER RECALLS IS SAUVAGE'S MURDER. WELL, I INTEND TO MAKE UP FOR THAT THIS YEAR...
...BY ANNOUNCING WHICH OF OUR ESTEEMED BOARD WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THAT CRIME.
GOOD SEEING YOU AGAIN, WEBB.
THANKS, PROFESSOR.
AS IF ASHLEY WASN'T COMPETITION ENOUGH...
AND WHAT AM I? I'VE GOT A CLIENT, TOO, YOU KNOW!
I THOUGHT WE WERE PARTNERS, MISTER... EVEN IF YOU WON'T COME TO WORK FOR MAZE.
IF WE'RE PARTNERS, WE OUGHT TO BE MARRIED, JEN... OR AT LEAST ENGAGED...
LET ME GET BACK TO YOU ON THAT...
DONNG
VONNG
THIS DELIVERY WAS EXPECTED HOURS AGO. IS IT YOUR INTENTION TO INSTALL IT TONIGHT?
THAT AIN'T OUR JOB, JEEVES! THE INSTALLERS'LL BE HERE IN THE MORNIN'!
12

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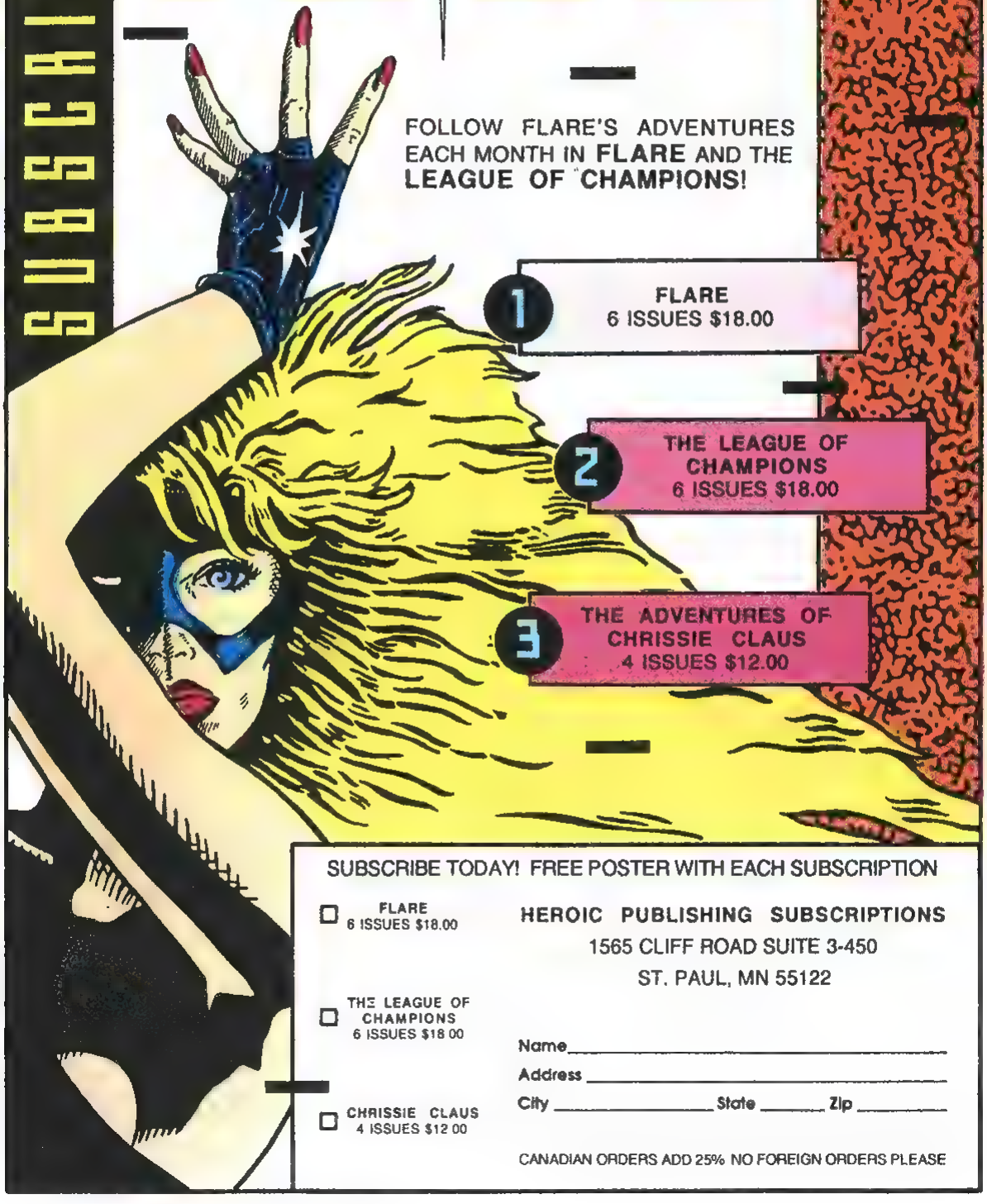
FLARE



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Sparkplug, King's Gambit appear.
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Sparkplug, King's Gambit appear.
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Sparkplug, King's Gambit appear

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First appearance, Indigo.
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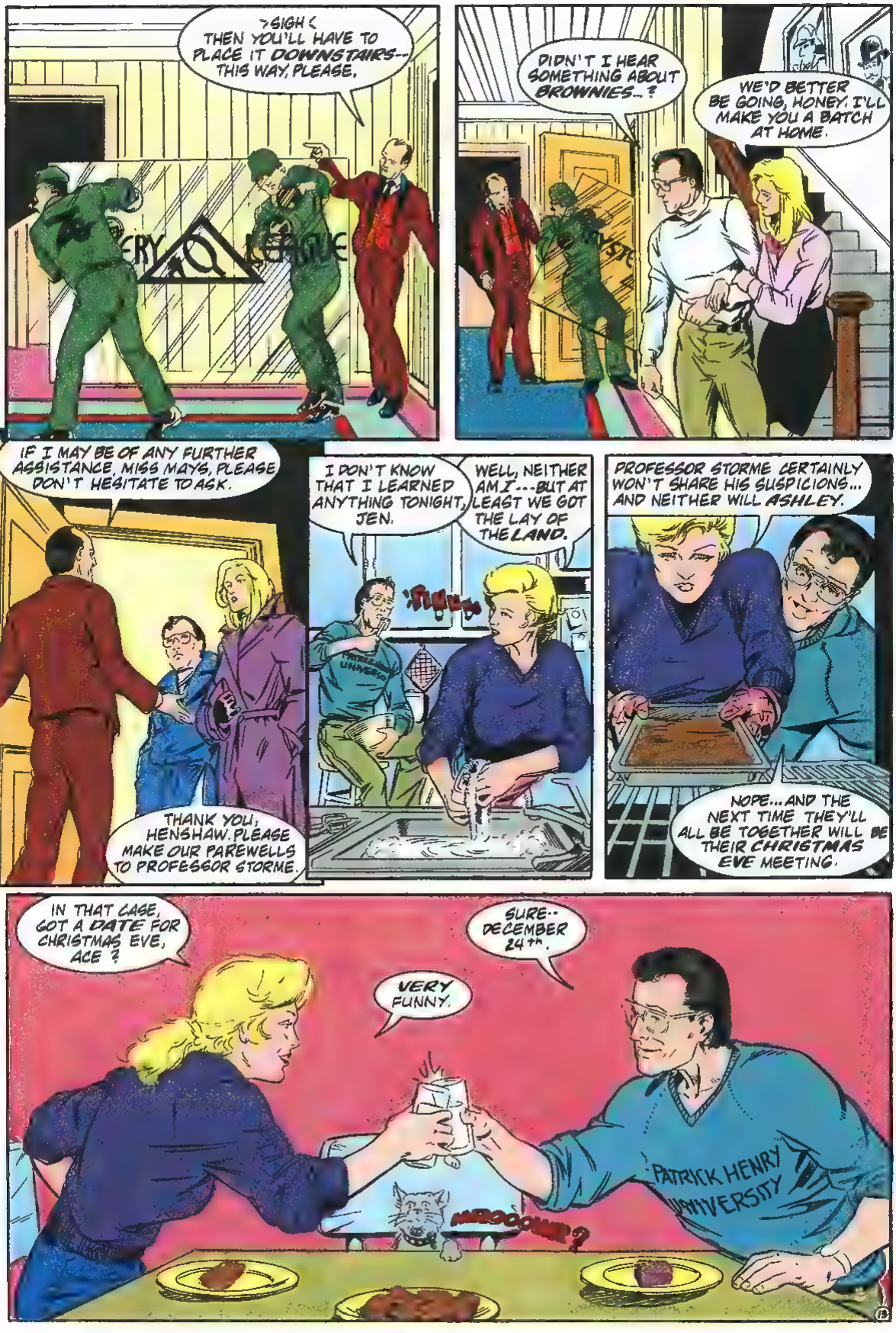
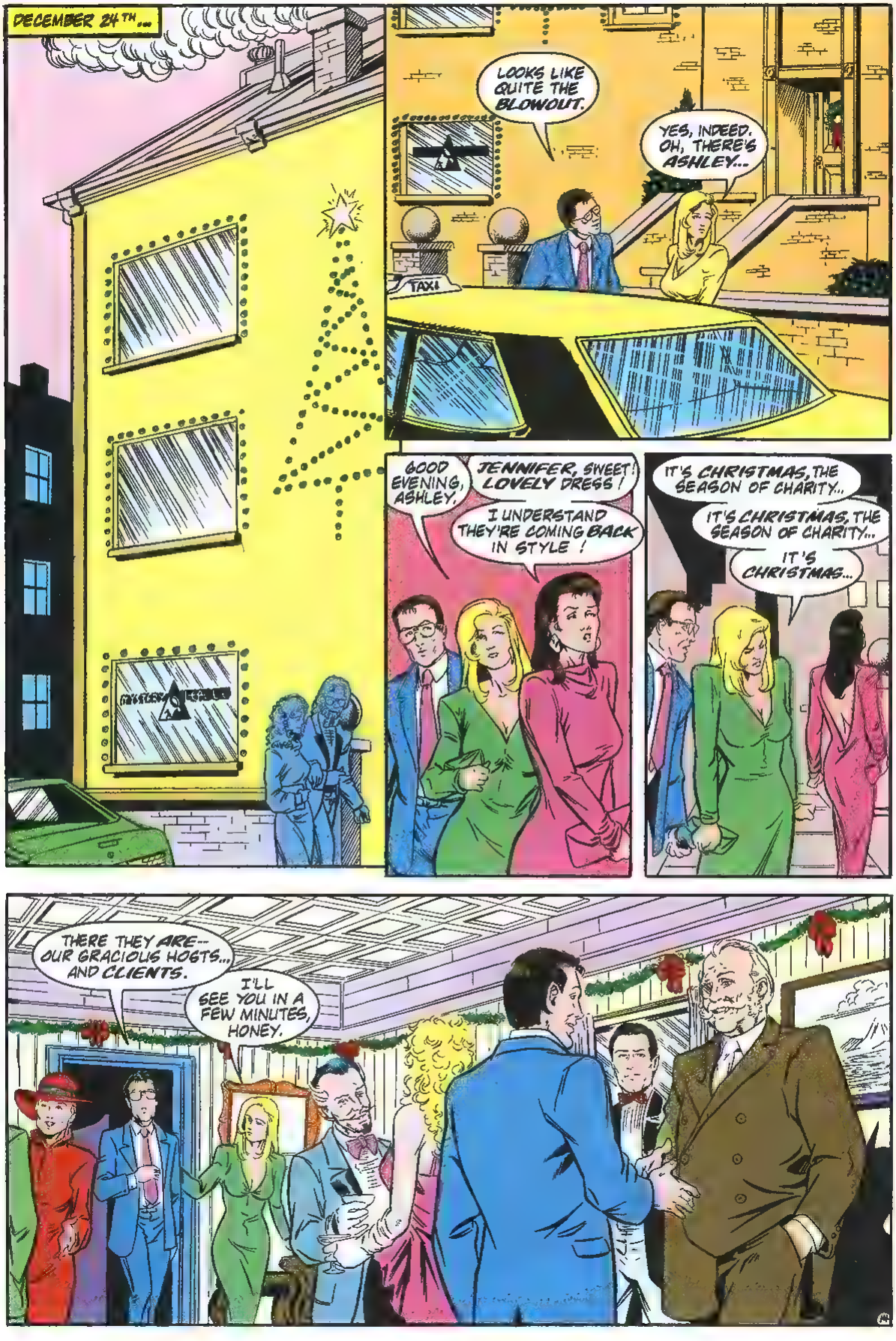
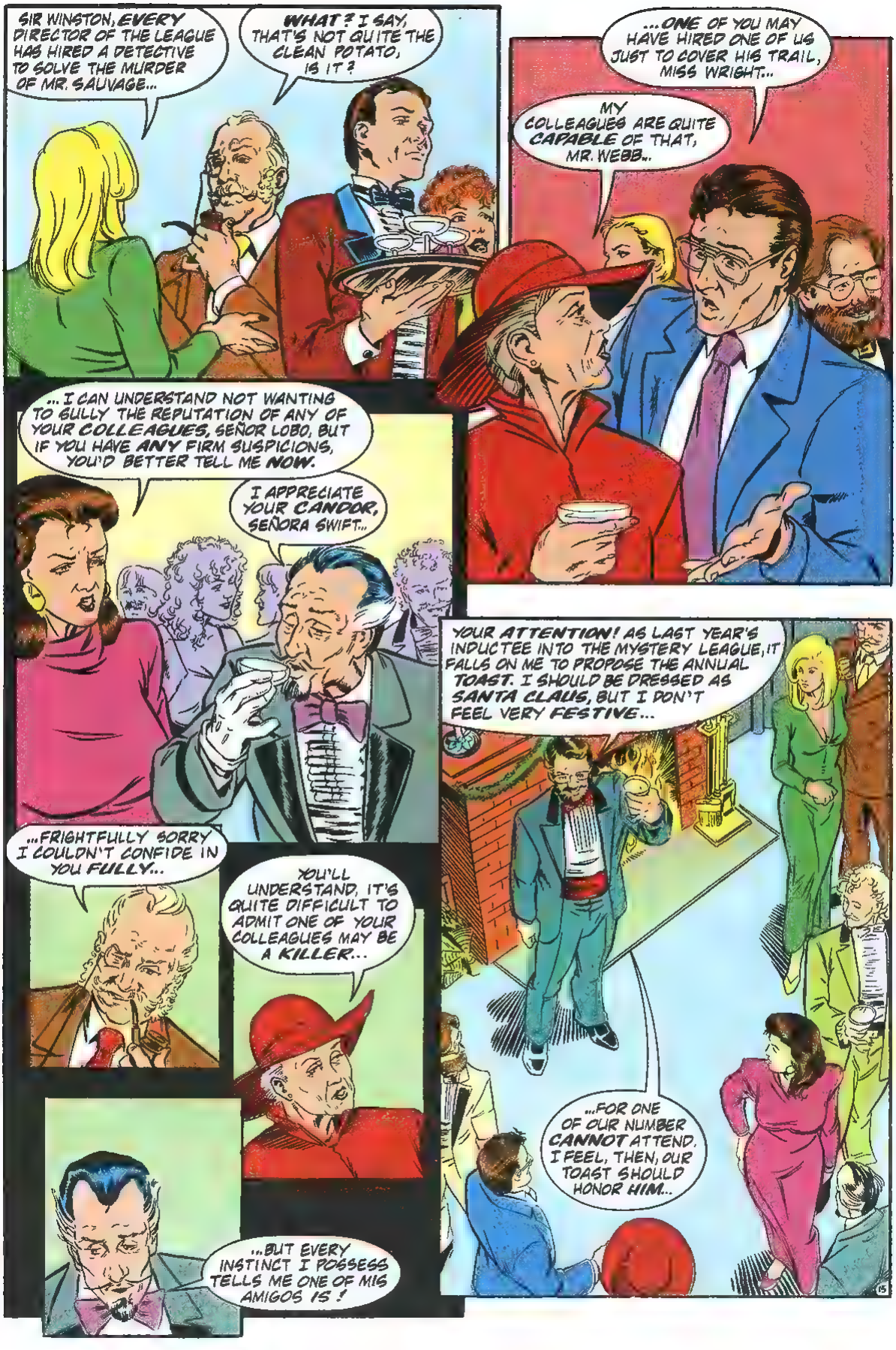
Indigo appears. Guest appearance, Star Trek's Walter Koenig.

• FANTASY BOOK •

Between 1981 and 1987, Heroic Publishing's predecessor company published 23 issues of the fiction magazine, Fantasy Book. Each of those issues is still available at $4.00 each.


>SIGH<
THEN YOU'LL HAVE TO PLACE IT DOWNSTAIRS-- THIS WAY, PLEASE.
DIDN'T I HEAR SOMETHING ABOUT BROWNIES...?
WE'D BETTER BE GOING, HONEY. I'LL MAKE YOU A BATCH AT HOME.
IF I MAY BE OF ANY FURTHER ASSISTANCE, MISS MAYS, PLEASE DON'T HESITATE TO ASK.
THANK YOU, HENSHAW. PLEASE MAKE OUR FAREWELLS TO PROFESSOR STORME.
I DON'T KNOW THAT I LEARNED ANYTHING TONIGHT, JEN.
WELL, NEITHER AM I---BUT AT LEAST WE GOT THE LAY OF THE LAND.
PROFESSOR STORME CERTAINLY WON'T SHARE HIS SUSPICIONS... AND NEITHER WILL ASHLEY.
NOPE... AND THE NEXT TIME THEY'LL ALL BE TOGETHER WILL BE THEIR CHRISTMAS EVE MEETING.
IN THAT CASE, GOT A DATE FOR CHRISTMAS EVE, ACE?
SURE-- DECEMBER 24TH.
VERY FUNNY.
PATRICK HENRY UNIVERSITY
MROOOWR?


DECEMBER 24TH...
LOOKS LIKE QUITE THE BLOWOUT.
YES, INDEED. OH, THERE'S ASHLEY...
TAXI
GOOD EVENING, ASHLEY.
JENNIFER, SWEET! LOVELY DRESS!
I UNDERSTAND THEY'RE COMING BACK IN STYLE!
IT'S CHRISTMAS, THE SEASON OF CHARITY..
IT'S CHRISTMAS, THE SEASON OF CHARITY...
IT'S CHRISTMAS...
THERE THEY ARE... OUR GRACIOUS HOSTS... AND CLIENTS.
I'LL SEE YOU IN A FEW MINUTES, HONEY.


SIR WINSTON, EVERY DIRECTOR OF THE LEAGUE HAS HIRED A DETECTIVE TO SOLVE THE MURDER OF MR. SAUVAGE...
WHAT? I SAY, THAT'S NOT QUITE THE CLEAN POTATO, IS IT?
...ONE OF YOU MAY HAVE HIRED ONE OF US JUST TO COVER HIS TRAIL, MISS WRIGHT...
MY COLLEAGUES ARE QUITE CAPABLE OF THAT, MR. WEBB..
...I CAN UNDERSTAND NOT WANTING TO SULLY THE REPUTATION OF ANY OF YOUR COLLEAGUES, SEÑOR LOBO, BUT IF YOU HAVE ANY FIRM SUSPICIONS, YOU'D BETTER TELL ME NOW.
I APPRECIATE YOUR CANDOR, SEÑORA SWIFT...
YOUR ATTENTION! AS LAST YEAR'S INDUCTEE INTO THE MYSTERY LEAGUE, IT FALLS ON ME TO PROPOSE THE ANNUAL TOAST. I SHOULD BE DRESSED AS SANTA CLAUS, BUT I DON'T FEEL VERY FESTIVE...
...FRIGHTFULLY SORRY I COULDN'T CONFIDE IN YOU FULLY...
YOU'LL UNDERSTAND, IT'S QUITE DIFFICULT TO ADMIT ONE OF YOUR COLLEAGUES MAY BE A KILLER...
...FOR ONE OF OUR NUMBER CANNOT ATTEND, I FEEL, THEN, OUR TOAST SHOULD HONOR HIM...
...BUT EVERY INSTINCT I POSSESS TELLS ME ONE OF MIS AMIGOS IS!
15

...TO PAUL SAUVAGE!
SSSH
SOME OF YOU THINK THAT WAS IN VERY POOR TASTE-- BUT VERY SOON NOW, THE ACTIONS OF PAUL'S KILLER WILL REVEAL HIM, AS THOUGH HE HAD SIGNED A CONFESSION!
PROFESSOR...
...BE CAREFUL! IF YOU'D LIKE PROTECTION--
I'M QUITE PREPARED FOR WHAT I MUST DO, MISS MAYS...
GOOD-BYE!
HOW IS HE, JEN?
IT'S DIFFICULT TO SAY IF HE'S TELLING THE TRUTH OR BLUFFING. I KNOW HE'S HAD A LITTLE TOO MUCH TO DRINK.
"AND IT LOOKS LIKE OUR CLIENTS AREN'T TOO FAR BEHIND HIM. I THINK THE BAND'S STARTING UP, LET'S DANCE."

from the desk of
Jennifer Mays

MAZE AGENTS

3622 JacobStreet, Wheeling, WV 26003

INTO THE MAZE

If this issue's Senor Lobo seems to bear more than a passing resemblance to a certain Belgian sleuth who is constantly praising his "little grey cells," consider that the *MAZE* team's tribute to *Agatha Christie* , creator of Miss Jane Marple and, of course, M. Hercule Poirot. 1990 is the one hundredth annuiversary of Miss Christie's birth, an occurance well worth noting. Dame Agatha left us some years ago, but her influence on the modern detective story will never be forgotten.

--MWB

Dear Mr. Campiti:

Just a few quick works on ***THE MAZE AGENCY SPECIAL.***

For starters: why *Special*? Why not *Annual* instead? Is it out of fear that some knothead will ask why there's not an Annual for the other Innovation books? No, that can't be right, being as you've solicited for this year's ***HERO ALLIANCE ANNUAL.*** So wha'hoppen?

Oh, well, let's not quibble. ***THE MAZE AGENCY*** is a lovely book, and any excuse that lets me have an extra helping of it is entirely welcome.

The four stories that appeared here were all as top-notch as I have come to expect from this series. I like the overall theme of the issue...three enticing murder cases, all on the same day, with a different artist for each one. And it was nice to at last get to see the original "pilot" episode of the series by Alan Davis, which I've heard about so many times.

In short, this was a very nice issue...one well deserving of the name "Special".

I guess you know what you're doing after all. Keep it up.

David Peattie
4517 Birch Bark Rd.
Concord, CA. 94521

We always <u>think</u> we know what we're doing, Dave, but it's nice to have it confirmed every now and then. Thanks a lot.

--MWB

Hi, y'all,

After reading ***MAZE SPECIAL*** #1, the vote is unanimous. If you ever put out an issue drawn entirely by the Pander Bros., none of the three comic buyers in this house will buy it. Not even if it's the second half of a two-parter. The phrase "sucks dead bears floating in swampwater" is the only one that adequately describes their work. I know nothing about art -- I don't even know what I like -- but I have a standard for comic book art. If I don't notice it, it's okay. If it assists the story, it's good. If it hinders the story, it's bad. The Pander stuff made me want to read with my eyes closed; it hindered the story. My housemate Michael, who does know something about art (but, to be fair, thinks Picasso is overrated) described this as "ugly," and lamented the unfairness of the Panders being the ones to draw Jen in that obviously (if drawn by anyone else) stunning dress.

Okay. That's off my chest, for what it's worth.

My husband Damon and I were discussing the habits of detectives the other day, and I remarked that one thing most of them do is play dumb. Lord Peter Wimsey has his "silly-ass-about-town" act; hosts of old-lady detectives, led by Miss Marple, pretend to be fluffy-headed; Columbo goes out of his way to convince the villain he can't see further than his nose. Jen and Gabe do not do this. Another thing they don't do, Damon pointed out, is collect physical evidence. When has either of them ever been drawn with an envelope and a pair of tweezers? Though I enjoy the purely intellectual story, with its tremendous potential for contrived and improbable solutions (not an adverse criticism; if a mystery isn't contrived and improbable, it's too easy), I have to admit that the occasional solid piece of evidence would be comforting to bring before a jury. (EQ and other classics frequently deduced a solution entirely in their heads, and then sought out physical evidence which must be there if their theories were correct -- which they always were.) He also thinks you underuse your format, and would welcome more purely visual clues (like the footprints in the issue about Gabe's apartment complex) to keep the reader alert to the details of the pictures.

Whatever you do, I will keep reading as long as ***THE MAZE AGENCY*** is not drawn by the Pander Brothers. Because I enjoy mysteries. My monthly comic intake is quite low, most titles either boring or repelling me; and it's good to take a four-color dip into the world's most moral genre, with attractive characters and all its violence discreetly understated. (People in all genres die too quickly, but at least people in mysteries die with a minimum of fuss and gore, and are always, always, essential to the plot!)

Peni R. Griffin
1123 W. Magnolia Ave.
San Antonio, TX. 78201

I think we have different opinions of "physical evidence," Peni. Gabe and Jen don't do an awful lot of prowling around on all fours, looking for cigarette butts, ala Sherlock Holmes, but most of the deductions they come up with are based on logical interpretatins of physical circumstances (this issue being a good example) -- although, now that you bring it up, the stories in the SPECIAL were pretty heavily skewed to the purely intellectual, weren't they?

"Sucks dead bears floating in swampwater"? (I give up, how do you make a dead bear float?)

--MWB

Dear Mike,

Onward to the *SPECIAL*, I have to scope it out this way:

1) "Morning: What Goes Up..." -- The usual fare. Top-notch stuff. A 10.

2) "Afternoon: Murder By A Hair" -- More of the same. Where can I get a logic puzzle? Another 10.

3) "The Mile-High Corpse" -- The cream of the issue. Well worth waiting for. Now that Alan is no longer regularly pencilling *Excalibur* for Marvel, perhaps he could do a fill-in or two.....! Another 10.

4) "Evening:The Dog That Bit Back" -- A visual nightmare! Patty DeWeiss looks like something from an outtake of *Beetlejuice* or some other flick of that genre. Eeeeeeeeyuuuchh! A good script spoiled by campy artwork. A 7 this time.

Hm, three 10's out of four. Pretty good score, if I do say so myself. Say hello to Mr. Steele for me, would you please? I'm outta here!

Jacob Gilbert
118 4th St. Apt. 1
Troy, N.Y. 12180

Contributing mightily to those first two perfect tens was the swell artwork of **Joe Staton** *and* **Rick Magyar** *(on "What Goes Up...") and Rollickin' Rick flying solo on "Murder By A Hair." Thanks for pitching in, guys, it was a blast. As to your verdict on "The Dog That Bit Back..." A visual nightmare"? Didn't anybody like The Pander Brothers interpretation of Jen and Gabe (besides yours truly)?*

--MWB

Dear Mike,

You were right. We *had* to see what the world of *THE MAZE AGENCY* looked like as drawn by the Panders. Just a little...different. I even spotted Charlie as the murderer, although I didn't realize he was astride the horse when Jen whistled. The portrayal of Tricia would have done the cubists proud (did you see the John Bolton story in A1 #3?), and I loved the dog. They'd be good storyboard artists for the next Clive Barker movie, don't you think?

The gentler stories (on the eyes, anyway) were also fun. Presenting Alan Davis' original story here was nice, even if it did mean two tales with the "they'd alibi each other if they were in it together" argument. After their three cases in a day, I expected Gabe to announce (cue voice of Rick Moranis) "What a day I'm havin'!" Does Jen get paid for cases she happens to help the police with? A lot of her work is like that, and she is trying to make a living out of this. The books and other items packed onto the shelves to the cover were also entertaining to work through. It might be nice to see Bill Willingham pencilling an issue someday. Rick Magyar's influence remains heavy but I was struck by how similar Alan's version looks to his.

All we need now is a story where the butler really did do it!

Take care,

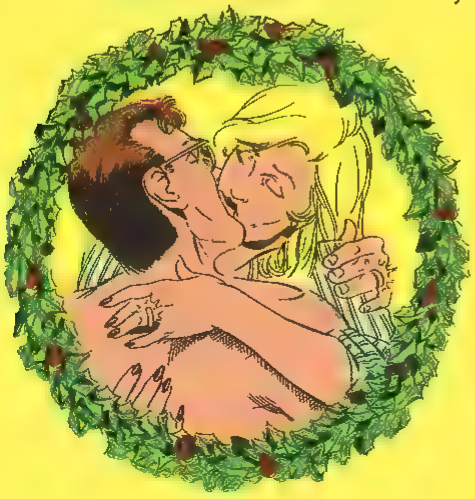
Malcolm Bourne
2 & 4 Bye Rd.
Bury, Lancashire, England

Thanks, Malcolm! I'm not sure I'd like to see every issue of MAZE rendered by Los Bros. Pander, but neither do I regret for a minute giving them a chance to strut their stuff in the SPECIAL.

As to the matter of Jen's finances, if she doesn't have a paying client, she receives nothing but good will and a feeling of civic pride for helping the police. But that's okay, too, since you never can tell when she'll need to have Lt. Bliss fix a parking ticket, or look the other way when Jen and Gabe need to stretch the law a little. Remember the THE MAZE AGENCY (Jen's business, not the comic) has lots of other operatives (like Max Harmon) who work on cases which Jen only supervises. In the next few issues, we'll try to show a little more of them.

Bill Willingham's detail-packed cover provided everyone with lots of entertainment as we picked out all the in-jokes...and made all our work that much later! Thanks again, Bill, drop by again sometime.

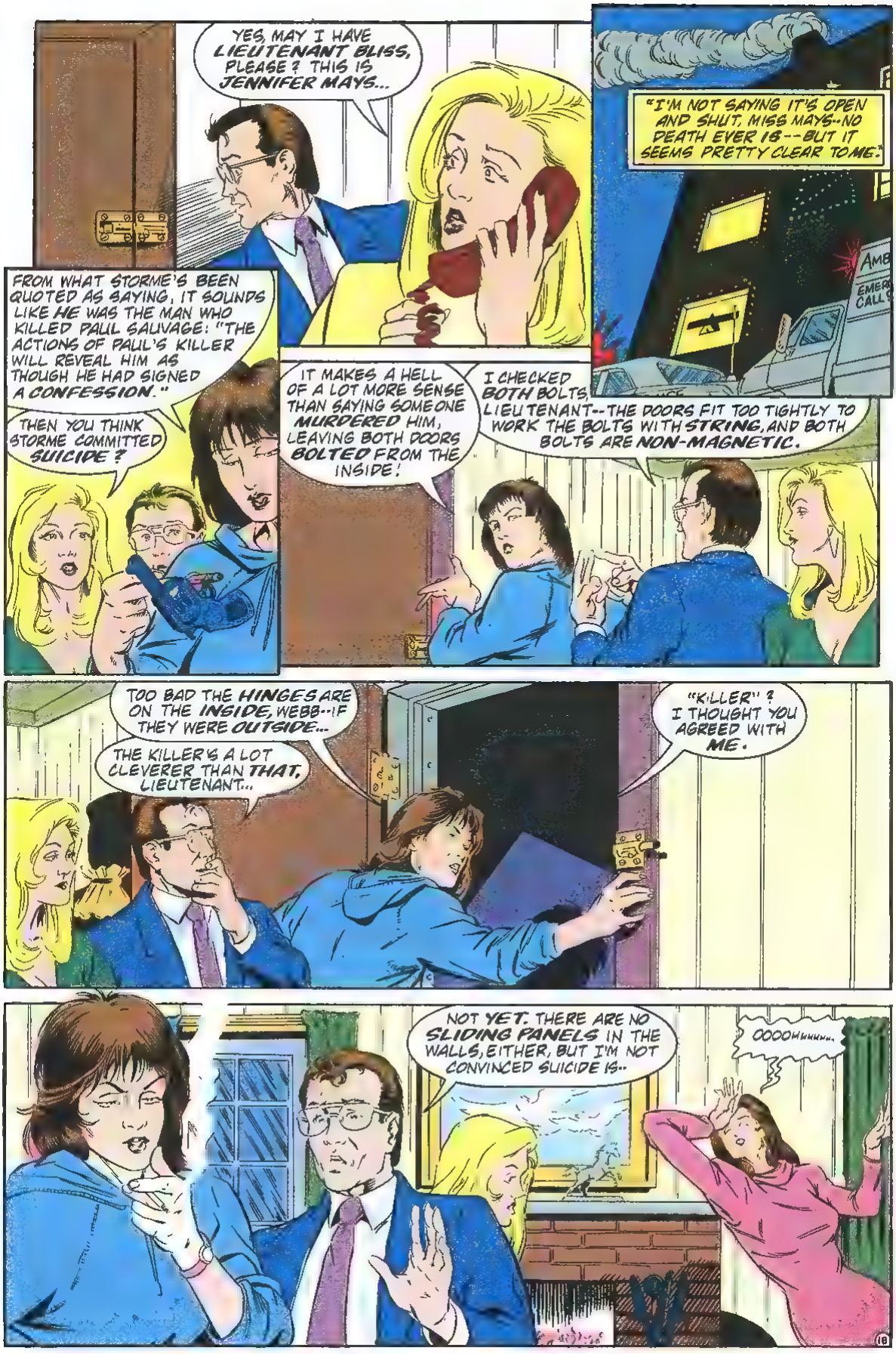
--MWB



NEXT ISSUE: Speaking of Agatha Christie, remember "And Then There Were None," when all the characters were trapped on an island with no way to get off, as a killer stalked them one by one? Next issue, Jen and Gabe are in that same spot as they visit the abandoned house of a dead Satanist, and encounter not one, but *two* impossible crimes that seem to have been committed by black magic! Be here for "The Problem of the Devil's Bedchamber," with art by **John Calimee** and **John Tighe**, cover by the ever-brilliant **Brian Bolland**, and the script, as usual, by the ever-present

--Mike W. Barr

MY WORD...!
SIR WINGTON, PROFESSOR STORME ISN'T RESPONDING TO THE MAID'S KNOCK...
STORME, OPEN THIS DOOR! STORME, DO YOU HEAR ME?
THE BACK DOOR'S LOCKED, TOO -- I THINK IT'S BOLTED.
THUMP THUMP
STAND BACK, LADIES -- THIS IS MAN'S WORK!
KRASSSH
GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!


YES, MAY I HAVE LIEUTENANT BLISS, PLEASE? THIS IS JENNIFER MAYS...
"I'M NOT SAYING IT'S OPEN AND SHUT, MISS MAYS--NO DEATH EVER IS--BUT IT SEEMS PRETTY CLEAR TO ME."
FROM WHAT STORME'S BEEN QUOTED AS SAYING, IT SOUNDS LIKE HE WAS THE MAN WHO KILLED PAUL SALVAGE: "THE ACTIONS OF PAUL'S KILLER WILL REVEAL HIM AS THOUGH HE HAD SIGNED A CONFESSION."
THEN YOU THINK STORME COMMITTED SUICIDE?
IT MAKES A HELL OF A LOT MORE SENSE THAN SAYING SOMEONE MURDERED HIM, LEAVING BOTH DOORS BOLTED FROM THE INSIDE!
I CHECKED BOTH BOLTS, LIEUTENANT--THE DOORS FIT TOO TIGHTLY TO WORK THE BOLTS WITH STRING, AND BOTH BOLTS ARE NON-MAGNETIC.
TOO BAD THE HINGES ARE ON THE INSIDE, WEBB--IF THEY WERE OUTSIDE...
THE KILLER'S A LOT CLEVERER THAN THAT, LIEUTENANT...
"KILLER"? I THOUGHT YOU AGREED WITH ME.
NOT YET. THERE ARE NO SLIDING PANELS IN THE WALLS, EITHER, BUT I'M NOT CONVINCED SUICIDE IS..
OOOOHHHHH...

IT... IT MUST HAVE BEEN THE CROWD... IF I COULD HAVE A FEW MINUTES IN A PLACE WHERE IT'S COOL... SOMEPLACE UPSTAIRS...
THERE'S MY ROOM, MISS--IT'S DIRECTLY ABOVE THE STUDY.
LEAD ON.
YES, I FEEL MUCH BETTER NOW... THANK YOU, GABRIEL, DARLING...
I'LL BE IN THE STUDY..." GABRIEL, DARLING. "
THEY SURE KNEW HOW TO BUILD THESE OLD BROWNSTONES... IN MY APARTMENT, THIS CLOSET WOULD BE ANOTHER BEDROOM.
YES, DIDN'T THEY? BUT THERE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE ANYTHING OF INTEREST HERE...
OR MAYBE THERE IS...
WHAT IS THAT, LIEUTENANT?
IT'S SOME KIND OF GLUE, MY KIDS USE IT FOR MODELS... IT'LL BOND SKIN IF YOU TOUCH IT WITH BARE HANDS, BUT WHAT'S IT DOING HERE?
I'M SURE I DON'T KNOW... MAYBE I COULD GIVE SOME TO MS. SWIFT AS A MOUTHWASH.
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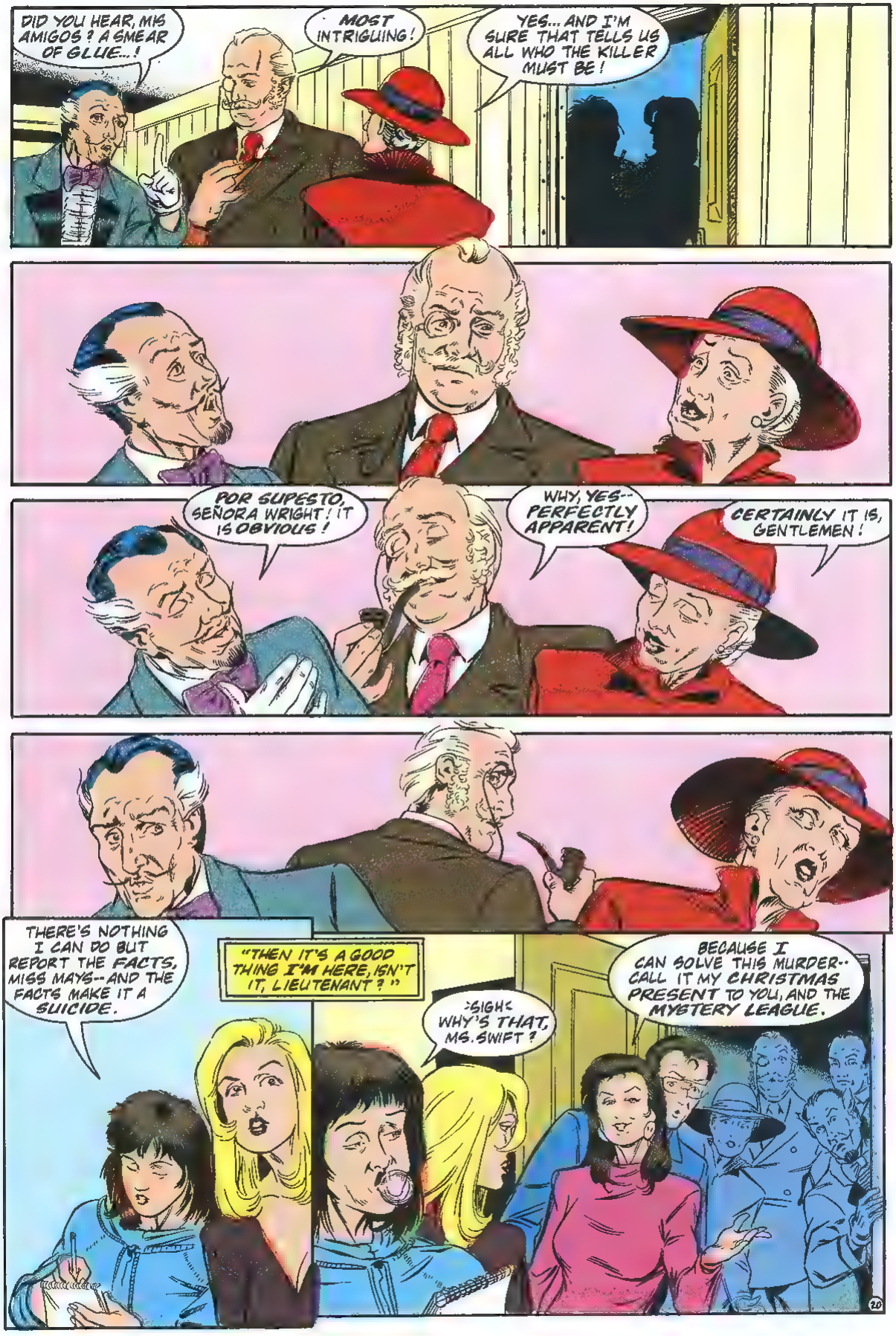
DID YOU HEAR, MIS AMIGOS ? A SMEAR OF GLUE...!
MOST INTRIGUING!
YES... AND I'M SURE THAT TELLS US ALL WHO THE KILLER MUST BE!
POR SUPESTO, SEÑORA WRIGHT! IT IS OBVIOUS!
WHY, YES-- PERFECTLY APPARENT!
CERTAINLY IT IS, GENTLEMEN!
THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO BUT REPORT THE FACTS, MISS MAYS-- AND THE FACTS MAKE IT A SUICIDE.
"THEN IT'S A GOOD THING I'M HERE, ISN'T IT, LIEUTENANT?"
:SIGH< WHY'S THAT, MS. SWIFT?
BECAUSE I CAN SOLVE THIS MURDER-- CALL IT MY CHRISTMAS PRESENT TO YOU, AND THE MYSTERY LEAGUE.
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IF SHE SOLVES THIS CASE...
SHE'S NEVER BEEN RIGHT, YET, BABE!
THERE'S A FIRST TIME FOR EVERYTHING!
THERE'S A PERFECTLY OBVIOUS SOLUTION AS TO HOW THE KILLER ESCAPED FROM A LOCKED ROOM-- AND THAT TELLS US WHO HE IS, AS WELL!
THE KILLER ENTERED-- AND EXITED-- THIS ROOM, LEAVING BOTH DOORS BOLTED FROM THE INSIDE BY STEALING A TRICK FROM SANTA CLAUS...
...HE WENT UP THE CHIMNEY!
"ONE CHIMNEY CONNECTS EVERY FIREPLACE IN THIS BUILDING--NOT ONLY THE FIREPLACES IN THE STUDY AND MAIN ROOM...
...BUT THE FIREPLACE IN HENSHAW'S ROOM AS WELL, WHICH I SAW WHILE "RECOVERING" FROM MY FEIGNED SWOON! THE THREE DIRECTORS WERE SEEN AT THE PARTY THROUGHOUT THE PERIOD OF THE MURDER...
...BUT YOU WEREN'T HENSHAW!
MS. SWIFT, I--

YOU HAD ACCESS TO THE DIRECTORS' COMPUTER CODES, BUT NO ONE SUSPECTED YOU--EXCEPT PAUL SAUVAGE AND PROFESSOR STORME ! FOR ONCE, THE CLICHE IS TRUE -- THE BUTLER DID IT !
MADAME, I MOST EMPHATICALLY DID NOT !
LET ME TELL HER, GABE !
YOU'D ENJOY IT TOO MUCH, HONEY-- I'D BETTER DO IT.
CONGRATULATIONS, ASHLEY, BUT--
OH, NO, YOU DON'T ! I CAN'T BE WRONG THIS TIME, TOO !
ASHLEY, THERE WAS A FIRE IN THE BOTTOM FIREPLACE ! ANYONE TRYING TO CLIMB THE CHIMNEY WOULD HAVE BEEN ASPHIXIATED !
THEN WHO IS THE KILLER, MR. KNOW-IT-ALL ?
THERE WERE TWO THINGS FOUND IN THIS ROOM THAT DIDN'T BELONG. ONE WAS A SMEAR OF GLUE, AND THE OTHER WAS AN ABSENCE-- OF NAILS IN THIS INNER DOORJAMB.
WHAT DO THEY HAVE IN COMMON ? WELL, THEY BOTH HOLD THINGS TOGETHER...
...WHICH IS EXACTLY WHAT THE GLUE DID-- IT HELD THE TWO HALVES OF THE DOORJAMB TOGETHER !
AFTER STORME'S MURDER, THE KILLER PRIED OFF THE OLD DOOR AND PLACED THE INNER HALF OF A DUPLICATE DOORJAMB AND ALREADY-LOCKED DOOR IN POSITION...
RAKKKT
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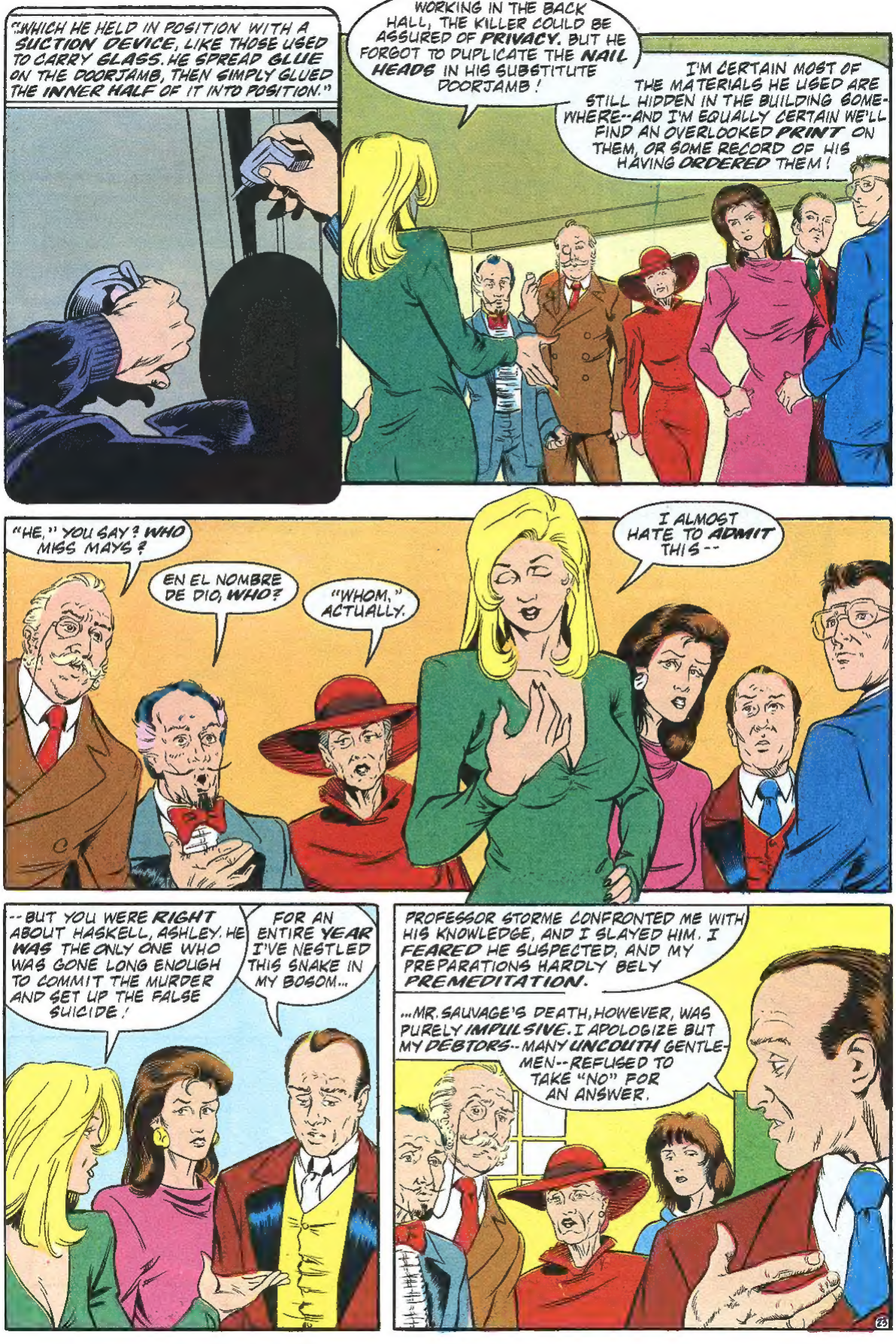
"WHICH HE HELD IN POSITION WITH A SUCTION DEVICE, LIKE THOSE USED TO CARRY GLASS. HE SPREAD GLUE ON THE DOORJAMB, THEN SIMPLY GLUED THE INNER HALF OF IT INTO POSITION."
WORKING IN THE BACK HALL, THE KILLER COULD BE ASSURED OF PRIVACY. BUT HE FORGOT TO DUPLICATE THE NAIL HEADS IN HIS SUBSTITUTE DOORJAMB!
I'M CERTAIN MOST OF THE MATERIALS HE USED ARE STILL HIDDEN IN THE BUILDING SOMEWHERE--AND I'M EQUALLY CERTAIN WE'LL FIND AN OVERLOOKED PRINT ON THEM, OR SOME RECORD OF HIS HAVING ORDERED THEM!
"HE," YOU SAY? WHO MISS MAYS?
EN EL NOMBRE DE DIO, WHO?
"WHOM," ACTUALLY.
I ALMOST HATE TO ADMIT THIS--
--BUT YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT HASKELL, ASHLEY. HE WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO WAS GONE LONG ENOUGH TO COMMIT THE MURDER AND SET UP THE FALSE SUICIDE!
FOR AN ENTIRE YEAR I'VE NESTLED THIS SNAKE IN MY BOSOM...
PROFESSOR STORME CONFRONTED ME WITH HIS KNOWLEDGE, AND I SLAYED HIM. I FEARED HE SUSPECTED, AND MY PREPARATIONS HARDLY BELY PREMEDITATION.
...MR. SAUVAGE'S DEATH, HOWEVER, WAS PURELY IMPULSIVE. I APOLOGIZE BUT MY DEBTORS--MANY UNCOUTH GENTLEMEN--REFUSED TO TAKE "NO" FOR AN ANSWER.

I'LL MAKE NO TROUBLE, LIEUTENANT BLISS... I'LL DEPART WITH YOU AFTER I'VE DISTRIBUTED OUR GUEST'S OUTERWEAR.
NO HURRY, HASKELL.
WE WERE GOING TO FOREGO INSTALLATION OF A NEW MEMBER IN PAUL'S MEMORY..
...BUT THE RESOLVING OF THAT MURDER CALLS FOR SPECIAL MEASURES!
SURE.
THANK YOU.
WILL YOU ACCEPT, SEÑORA MAYS, SEÑOR WEBB?
MERRY CHRISTMAS, ASHLEY.
OH! ALSON!
THANK HEAVEN THAT'S OVER... NO MORE CASES FOR ME FOR THE REST OF THE YEAR.
THEN IF ANYONE ASKS...
...I'LL TELL THEM YOU'RE OTHERWISE ENGAGED.
...And to All a Good Night!

The End

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Next Issue:

"The Problem of The Devil's Bedchamber"

Cover by Brian Bolland!